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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MARCH 21, 2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 21, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

ZAMAN / OZGUR GUNDEM: Terrorist leader Abdullah Ocalan reportedly proposed a system that would bring together the followers of the terrorist organization PKK in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Ocalan named himself leader of a "democratic confederalism" and suggested that the movement's flag will be a yellow sun and a red star on a green background. The new "flag" was used for the first time in many places during Nevruz by his followers. According to Ozgur Gundem, "democratic confederalism" allegedly aims to solve social problems through democratic means, avoiding the use of force and violence.

MILLIYET / RADIKAL / TERCUMAN / HURRIYET / ZAMAN / CUMHURIYET / EKSPRES / OZGUR GUNDEM: President Ahmet Necdet Sezer sent a celebratory message to all citizens and all Turkish communities celebrating Nevruz, with wishes that the new year's arrival will bring peace and brotherhood. Large numbers of ethnic Kurdish citizens participated in Nevruz nationwide and many other Turks celebrated the occasion, as well. Nevruz in Van and Urfa provinces reportedly were remarkably well attended compared to past celebrations, with numbers reportedly reaching 100,000 in Urfa. Leyla Zana and other Democratic Movement coordinators addressed people in Urfa and set the Nevruz fire. In Urfa and Kiziltepe, banners read, "We are saluting the leadership of 'democratic confederalism'". Kiziltepe's Nevruz was dedicated to Ugur Kaymaz. Some there attempted to bring down the Turkish flag but security officers brought it back up. In Mersin, where 50,000 people participated, some groups allegedly turned Nevruz into support for the divisive propaganda of the PKK/Kongra-Gel; some in that city attempted to burn the Turkish flag. Although Nevruz was banned in Tunceli on the grounds that the city's Organizing Committee's written request referred to "Newruz," instead of the Turkish version "Nevruz", 500 hundred people burned the Nevruz fire and shouted slogans supporting Ocalan. In Antalya, the police demanded that the banners reading "Newruz" be brought down. DEHAP members protested by sticking black adhesive tape over the letter "w."

OZGUR GUNDEM: Selahattin Gunbay, a 13-year-old boy, was allegedly shot dead in Nusaybin, Mardin province, as he was shepherding a flock of sheep in the outskirts of Kayadibi village, renowned for its village guards. Gunbay's family applied to the Diyarbakir Branch of Human Rights Association and claimed that village guards shot their son.

CUMHURIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM: According to various sources, the European Court of Human Rights will demand that Turkey prosecute Abdullah Ocalan once again. (Note: Cumhuriyet says Sinan Aygun, Chairman of the Ankara Chamber of Commerce, said this, while Ozgur Gundem attributes such statements to Abdullah Ocalan's attorneys. End note.) Irfan Dundar, Ocalan's attorney, said, "The EU will demand this reform from Turkey. The Turkish government, which evaded political damage as best it could, is now trying to find a formula to solve the issue." Aygun stated that certain countries in the EU are trying to destabilize Turkey, sometimes by using the Armenian and Greek diasporas, and other times by using "divisive components" within Turkey.

BOLGE / ZAMAN / HURRIYET (CUKUROVA) : A group of TEKEL (Turkish state tobacco group) employees working in TEKEL's Adana factory protested against Abdullatif Sener, Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister, during an opening ceremony in Adana. Adana Governor Cahit Kirac talked with the protestors himself and requested that they end their protests. As the group shouted slogans, "We won't let TEKEL be sold, we won't let our country be sold," and criticized the government, they were taken away from the scene within a police circle.

VAKIT: Huseyin Celik, Minister of Education, was protested against during the opening ceremony of a private primary school in Adana. The protestors demanded that the graduates of Imam-Hatip schools be allowed to attend universities and the head-scarf-ban in public places be lifted.

TERCUMAN: The traffic congestion at the Habur Border gate in Sirnak still makes truck drivers uncomfortable as they suffer from the pile-up in trucks in front of the gate due to the

increasing volume of trade between Turkey and Iraq.

EKSPRES / OZGUR GUNDEM / BOLGE: Mehmet Agar, the leader of DYP (True Path Party), bitterly criticized the government's policies during a party meeting in Adana. Agar reportedly addressed 12,000 people during his speech. TEKEL and TELEKOM employees carried banners and demanded that the government stop the privatization of the state enterprises.

BOLGE / OZGUR GUNDEM: On the second anniversary of the U.S. operation in Iraq, a 100-person group marched to the front gate of the American Consulate in Adana and chanted slogans saying "Murderer U.S.A. Get out of Iraq," "Close down Incirlik Airbase," and "Long live the brotherhood of people." Turkish Anti-Terror and Riot Police took security precautions and did not allow the group to get closer to the building. Five demonstrators left a black wreath in front of the Consulate Gate.

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